

Media Information: 27 December 2007

BALTIC

BARTHÉLÉMY TOGUO

Heart Beat

Tuesday 29 January – Sunday 13 April 2008.

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art presents Cameroon-born artist Barthélémy Toguó's first solo exhibition in the UK. Heart Beat opens in the Ground Floor gallery space on Tuesday 29 January.

Barthélémy Toguó is a multi-disciplinary artist working in drawing, photography, sculpture, ceramics and performance. The artist will be in residency at BALTIC during December 2007 and January 2008 . As part of the residency process, Toguó will collaborate with Fine Art students from Northumbria University to produce new work.

The exhibition will comment on the use, abuse and excess of information in the era of global exchange. The artist and students will 'censor' pages from a UK daily broadsheet newspaper by deleting sections of text, using black marker pens, leaving only the images. This 'democratic' action will create a new 'face' for the newspaper page, allowing for new readings and asking us to question the information we receive.

Toguó believes that the media can be all consuming even intoxicating with its effects being both good and bad as he explains: *"For me information is primordial. I've got the radio on all day. I like to read newspaper headlines and compare them according to their political sympathies. It's a vital need to know what's going on in the entire world. That overdose of information, scoops, scandals, disinformation naturally inspires me a lot. You need to step back, however, vis-à-vis the information, the press, precisely in order to disassociate the real info from the disinformation. But disinformation is a wonderful source of inspiration!"*

The 'censored' newspaper pages will be used as wallpaper, to transform the Ground Floor gallery, creating a poignant backdrop to a new series of integrated watercolours from the ongoing *Dreamcatcher* and *Wild Cat Dinner* series. Each painting will be approximately 280cm x 130cm in size. Using diluted colours the images investigate social concerns and depict bodies expressing universal emotional experiences including, joy, pain, pleasure, suffering, sex, violence and war.

As part of **Heart Beat**, **Toguo** will continue his ongoing **Head Above Water** project which has already been executed in Lagos, Cuba, Hiroshima, Johannesburg, Saint-Denis (France) and Kosovo... The artist will perform an action he describes as a 'referendum' by asking members of the community to send him a postcard with their message to the world. For the project in Gateshead, **Toguo** will ask for opinions about the presence of the UK Armed Forces in Iraq. 96 completed postcards will then be framed collectively and displayed alongside **Toguo's** paintings.

Barthélémy Toguo was born in 1967 in Cameroon. In 1993 after studying at the **School of Art, Abidjan**, Ivory Coast he moved to Europe and began exhibiting and performing while finishing his studies at the **Higher School of Art, Grenoble** (France) and **Kunstakademie of Dusseldorf** (Germany). He currently lives and works between New York, Bandjoun (Cameroon) and Paris. **Toguo** has founded the **Bandjoun Station Art Centre**, Bandjoun to allow international artists from all disciplines to develop their work in collaboration with local communities.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Northumbria University

Barthelemy Toguo will be working with Fine Art Degree students from The Arts and Social Science Faculty of Northumbria University.

To find out more about **Barthélémy Toguo** as well as other exhibitions at BALTIC visit the BALTIC Library & Archive online database <http://archive.balticmill.com> The database contains over 100 films and audio files documenting the artists and their work.

BALTIC is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. BALTIC presents a constantly changing, distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation, commissioning and communication of contemporary visual art. BALTIC has welcomed over 2.7 million visitors, since opening to the public in July 2002.

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Opening hours: Mon - Sun 10.00 - 18.00

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